United Nations S/2016/3

Security Council

Distr.: General
4 January 2016

Original: English

Letter dated 3 January 2016 from the Chargé d' affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I should be grateful if you would circulate the attached letter as a document of the Security Council (see annex).

(*Signed*) Peter **Ilichev**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 3 January 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Happy New Year. I hope that 2016 will be a year of more justice and peace all over the world.

Some hours after the vote on Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), the Council for Democratic Syria thanked the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kerry, Mr. Lavrov and the Vienna Group for their efforts to provide a road map for peace and a democratic transition in Syria.

The Council for Democratic Syria is a coalition composed essentially of secular Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Turkmens and Armenians belonging to political, civilian and military Syrian groups who played a fundamental role in the Cairo conference for the Syrian opposition and the Moscow forum (in 2015). The organizations of our coalition were the first who advocated a political solution based on the Geneva Communiqué. We regularly coordinated our efforts to help the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Staffan de Mistura.

Our military branch, the Forces for Democratic Syria, was the first, before the international Coalition, that struggled against terrorism: male and female Syrian fighters fighting for freedom and dignity in Kobani and other cities who provided the example of a realizable strategy against terror and despotism. The recent battle of the Tashrin dam against Daesh was a very good example.

Our forces control more than 16 per cent of Syrian territory

The Council for Democratic Syria adopted the national charter and road map of the Cairo conference and also supported the first and second rounds of the Vienna peace talks and Security Council resolutions about Syria that are against terrorist groups.

Unfortunately, the Riyadh conference for the Syrian opposition excluded very important components of the Syrian opposition, which, for the sake of regional alliances and for political reasons, gave the lion's share to pro-Turkish, Qatari and Saudi groups. I refused my invitation under the umbrella of exclusion and marginalization. The Riyadh conference also invited some groups who coordinate daily with Jabhat al-Nusra in common military operations (for example, Jaish al-Fatah), and, at the same time, they refused to recognize the Cairo conference.

The regional influence on Riyadh makes the Riyadh high commission for negotiations partial, exclusive and dependent. So we cannot agree to join any delegation under this qualification.

In Syria, we have more than one front: jihadists, Islamists and secularists. And the regional interference in our internal struggle gives some small groups an important place while ruling the others out. All military groups that were represented in Riyadh control about 5 per cent of Syrian territory. Seriously, how can a ceasefire be negotiated in the absence of our military forces, which control 16 per cent?

Resolution 2254 (2015) takes into consideration the Cairo conference, the Moscow forum and the Riyadh conference. We hope that the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General will do so also.

We are ready, because the high commission of Riyadh rejects the idea of equal rights in a common delegation, to participate in a multilateral negotiation. Our delegation will be composed of Cairo conference and Moscow forum figures and prominent experts.

The Council for Democratic Syria is ready to cooperate with the Security Council and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on future negotiations based on the principle of equal rights. Our proposition was formulated in order to respect the Geneva Communiqué (as a representative delegation of the Syrian opposition).

(*Signed*) Haytham **Manna**
Co-President
Council for Democratic Syria